

REMARKS

Claims 1-43 were pending in this application when the present Office Action was mailed. Claims 1, 4-6, 17-19, 22, 29-32, and 36-38 have been amended. Claims 16, 27-28, 33-35, and 39-43 have been canceled without prejudice to pursuing those claims in a continuation or other application. Accordingly, claims 1-15, 17-26, 29-32, and 36-38 are now pending in this application.

In the present Office Action dated October 7, 2004, claims 20-21 were allowed; claims 5-7, 17-19, and 29 were objected to; and claims 1-4, 8-16, 22-28, and 30-43 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of this office action is as follows:

(A) Claims 1-3, 8-10, 12, 14, 15, 22, 26, 30, and 36 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Boehringer et al. (US Pat. No. 5,806,806).

(B) Claims 1-4, 8-11, 13-16, 22-28, 30-32, and 36-43 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Bowden et al. (US Pat No. 5,538,209).

(C) Claims 27 and 33-35 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Stableford (US Pat. No. 4,776,543) or Fernandez (US Pat. No. 5,489,830).

(D) Claims 5-7, 17-19, and 29 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected a claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

(E) Claims 20-21 were allowed.

The undersigned attorney wishes to thank the Examiner for participating in a telephone interview on December 29, 2004. During that interview, the parties discussed the Boehringer reference, the Bowden reference, the Stableford reference, the Fernandez reference, and Baetke (US Pat. No. 4,287,788), which was also cited in the Office Action. The parties agreed that the applicant's proposed change to the language in independent claims 1, 22, 30, and 36 appears to overcome the art of record.

The agreed-to clarifying language has been incorporated into these claims. Accordingly, independent claims 1, 22, 30, and 36 are in condition for allowance. Claims 2-15, 23-26, 31-32, and 37-38, which depend from these claims, are also in condition for allowance, for the reasons discussed above and for the features of these dependent claims. Claims 17-19 have been rewritten in independent form to include all of the elements of their corresponding base claim and are also in condition for allowance. Accordingly, all of the claims now pending in the application (claims 1-15, 17-26, 29-32, and 36-38) are in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the cited art. The applicant accordingly requests reconsideration of the application and a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call Tim R. Seeley at (206) 359-6477.

Respectfully submitted,
Perkins Coie LLP

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Tim R. Seeley
Tim R. Seeley
Registration No. 53,575

Correspondence Address:

Customer No. 25096
Perkins Coie LLP
P.O. Box 1247
Seattle, Washington 98111-1247
(206) 359-8000